

Appl. No. 09/808,001
Atty. Docket No. 8380LS/PRGA 0103 PUSP
Amdt. dated 01/03/2008
Reply to Office Action of 08/21/2007
Customer No. 27752

REMARKS

Claim Status

Claims 1-14, and 76 are pending in the present application.

Claims 1, 2, 10, 11, 14, and 76 have been non-substantively amended to add letters identifying various claimed steps or elements of the claims. This has been done for convenience in referring to the claim elements. This claim element identification system is similar to the one first used by the Examiner in the Office Action of August 21, 2007.

No new matter is believed to be added. No additional claims fee is believed to be due.

Non-Pending Claims Rejected

Paragraph 7 of the August 21, 2007 Office Action and parts of Paragraph 6 indicated that Claims 15-26 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a). Claims 15-76 were previously canceled without prejudice in response to a restriction requirement. Since these claims are not pending and were understood to not qualify for consideration in the present examination, this Response does not substantively address the rejections made to them in the Office Action.

Claim Rejections

(1) Claim Rejection – 35 USC 101

Claim 76 has been rejected under 35 USC 101. Claim 76 is directed toward a “Computer-readable having computer-readable instructions for performing a method...”. The Office Action suggests including after “instructions” the following language: “that, when read by a computer or processor, operate to cause a data processing apparatus to...”

The computer-readable media claim (Claim 76) would clearly and unambiguously be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art to mean and be limited to the situation wherein the claimed instructions are for causing a computer processor to execute the claimed steps. The additional inclusion of the suggested language is unnecessary for imparting utility under 35 USC 101. Further, a brief survey by the undersigned attorney of recently granted US patents containing “computer-readable media” claims revealed

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that numerous claims were granted without expressly including language equivalent to the amendment suggested in the Office Action - further indicative that such claims are commonly understood to be directed toward instructions for execution by a computer apparatus. Applicant respectfully asserts that such amendment should not be required for Claim 76.

(2) Claim Rejections – 35 USC 103(a)

Claims 1-14 and 76 have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over AAPA (Applicant Admitted Prior Art) in view of Grainger (US 2002/0111824) and Parks (US 6,038,573).

The present invention relates to a method for managing technical specifications and standards that includes the steps of:

(b) electronically circulating a document with a draft technical standard to a review group;

(c) automatically attaching review group comments to the draft technical standard;

(d) electronically locking a document with the draft technical standard;

(e) electronically circulating a locked document with the draft technical standard to an approval group having access to the review group comments

(f) collecting electronic approvals from each member of the approval group;

(g) rendering a locked document with a draft technical standard unchangeable once each member of the approval group has electronically approved of the draft technical standard.

As described above, there are two separate document circulation steps: (b) - circulating to a review group the individual members of which may attach comments; and (e) – circulating a document locked (according to step d) to an approval group.

There are also two separate and distinct locking steps – (d) and (g). Step (d) involves electronically locking the draft technical standard after the review group has reviewed the draft technical standard. The locked draft technical standard is circulated (step e) to the approval group, the members of which can approve or choose to not

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approve, and in either case can choose to add comments. Limited persons, typically the originator of the standard or other authorized persons, may “unlock” draft technical standard in their discussion, such as may happen upon review of comments received from members of the approval group. In that case, the originator can modify the draft technical standard (or create a new draft technical standard), which can then be subsequently locked and circulated to the approval group. If the approval group approves the draft technical standard, the draft technical standard can then be rendered “unchangeable” – step (g). Once it is rendered unchangeable, it cannot be modified or changed by anyone, including the originator.

The present Office Action acknowledges that AAPA fails to teach steps (c), (d), and (g). Applicant further points out that AAPA does not disclose a review and approve process including the present inventions two document circulation steps - (b) and (e) – in combination with the two “locking steps - (d) and (g).

Grainger has been cited in the Office Action for its disclosure of an electronic document locking system. The Office Action admits that the combination of AAPA/Grainger fails to teach step (d) (which occurs after step (c)), and step (g). Grainger and/or AAPA/Grainger further fail to teach the combination of the two circulation steps of the present invention – steps (b) and (e), with or without the additional combination with the present invention’s claimed locking steps – steps (d) and (g).

Parks has been cited in the Office Action for its disclosure of an electronic locking feature (Col 9, line 63 – Col 10, line 5) and for its disclosure of a choice of read-write or read-only forms (Col 11, lines 29-35). Parks does not overcome the failures of the AAPA and Grainger to disclose the claimed invention. The dichotomy of read-write versus read-only forms in Parks is distinctly different from the locking standards applied in Applicants claimed invention.

In the claimed invention, the documents are locked (step d) in a manner that an administrator can modify them, but the review group members cannot. In the second locking step (g) of the present invention, the document is rendered unchangeable - no party can modify the document under any circumstances.

The mere reference in Parks of read-only and read-write forms fails to teach or disclose Applicant’s distinctly different locking steps (d) and (g). For example, if one

chose the read-write format of Parks for step (d), there would be no locking of the documents, and any reviewer or approver could make modifications. If one chose the read-only format of Parks for step (d), it is ambiguous what control or flexibility would be provided. In some read-only formats the user has a choice whether to access it via read-only or read-write. If a reviewer has a choice, and can choose "read-write, then the security objects of the present invention's step (d) are not met. Even if there is no choice and it must be accessed by a reviewer as a read-only form, the Park disclosure is still problematic because Parks does not teach that the document should be read-only for the reviewer but still capable of being modified by the originator.

The disclosure of read-only documents in Parks is also problematic for step (g). Some read-only documents can be re-opened and accessed by the document owners as a read-write document. Thus, if one chose the read-only format for step (g), it is unclear whether this would necessarily mean that the document was rendered permanently unchangeable and could not be modified by any person including the administrator or originator of the document. Unless the document is rendered permanently unchangeable under step (g), document integrity necessary required in the present invention for final technical specifications and standards systems is not met.

Thus, there is no teaching or suggestion in Parks, with or without AAPA/Grainger, of a document management process that can render documents necessarily unmodifiable by "reviewers" and necessarily modifiable by a designated document owner at an earlier stage of the process, while later in the process rendering a document necessarily unmodifiable by anyone, regardless of whether they are reviewer, approver, or document originator.

Even if Park did suggest or disclose the document security protocol required by the present invention, as discussed above AAPA/Grainger further fail to teach or suggest the two step circulation process according to the present invention, the combination of AAPA, Grainger, and Parks therefore further fail to suggest this claimed two stage circulation process in combination with the claimed two step document locking protocol.

In conclusion, there is no teaching in Parks that would suggest to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify AAPA/Grainger in a way to overcome AAPA/Grainger's failures to disclose the process of the present invention wherein technical standards are reviewed and approved via the claimed multiple locking steps. Even if there was such a

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teaching in Parks, the combination would still fail to suggest the claimed invention because none of the references, alone or in combination, suggest the claimed combination of all of the present inventions elements including but not limited to the combination of two, distinct document locking steps and two, separate document circulation steps.

(3) Claim Rejections – 35 USC 103(a)

Claims 1-14 and 76 have been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over AAPA (Applicant Admitted Prior Art) in view of Grainger (US 2002/0111824) and Parks (US 6,038,573), as applied above, in further view of Jeffery (US 6,957,384).

AAPA, Grainger, and Parks were applied as discussed above. Jeffery was cited for its teaching (according to the Office Action) of automatic attachment of comments or attachments to a draft document. Jeffery does not relate to or overcome the failings of AAPA, Grainger, and Parks to disclose or suggest the claimed invention. Therefore Applicant maintains that the pending claims are patentable over the present rejection for the same reasons as discussed previously in this Response.

Conclusion

In light of the above remarks, it is requested that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the pending rejections and objections. Favorable action in the case is respectfully requested.

This response represents an earnest effort to place the application in proper form and to distinguish the invention as now claimed from the applied references. In view of the foregoing, reconsideration of this application, entry of the amendments presented herein, and allowance of Claims 1-14 and 76 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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